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ABSTRACT

The mission of the Oglala Lakota College is to establish and operate certificate- and degree-granting postsecondary institutions on Pine Ridge Reservation. The purposes of the college include tribal, cultural, academic, and community concerns. This booklet presents the 25-year history of the college; the historical struggle of the Lakota (Sioux) people; and the dream to provide an independent, reservation-based college. The realization of the dream came in 1971 when 19 courses in 9 subjects were taught in local schools and peoples' basements. In 1978, 2-year degree programs were offered in seven areas of study. In 1996 the college offered a Master of Arts in Lakota Leadership/Management, a Bachelor of Science degree in five professions, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Lakota Studies and History, four Associate of Applied Science degrees, and 15 Associate of Arts degrees. Other programs included secondary education certification, special education endorsement, Child Development Associate, General Equivalency Diploma (GED), and graduate courses in education. Twenty-two quotations from college faculty and staff show the impact of the college on the Lakota community. The college has 10 dreams for the future: construction of a resource center, classrooms, and community learning centers; development of degree programs in environmental and computer sciences; creation of endowed chairs in Lakota studies; student assessment; certification in education and health; integration of resources; expansion of student resources; creation of a competency-based teacher education program; and development of research, consulting, and training services. Challenges include funding and transportation. By the year 2001, the college envisions increased enrollment, completed campus construction projects, expanded degree programs, and computerized status of campus activities. Includes four Lakota poems. (SAS)

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Ikopesni Ihanbla Po
Dare to Dream

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Oglala Lakota College
25 Years

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Ikopesni Ihanbla Po
Dare to Dream

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Mitakuyepi,

I begin this letter with the word Mitakuyepi which means my relatives. Lakota people end all prayers with the words Mitakuye Ovasin which mean we are all related. The 25 year history of Oglala Lakota College shows how much can happen when our Lakota people work with other relatives. Without the support of thousands of people around the country, the College might not have made it to 25 years. The booklet shows what can happen when our people dream despite tremendous odds.

This booklet is a history of the college, our struggle, our people's dream, our deep needs, our ongoing challenge and a vision of our future. The title Ikopesni Ihanbla Po is literally translated don't be afraid to dream or have vision. This phrase is familiar to Lakota children since grandparents are always saying it to them. It's appropriate for the people who started Oglala Lakota College 25 years ago.

This is a tale of the growing despair with education that the Oglala Lakota felt in the late 60's and of the dream of a few to turn the dismal statistics around. They dared to dream and were doubted by many and actually laughed at by University of South Dakota faculty at a meeting to plan the delivery of college courses on the reservation. A reservation based college?

We'll tell how a varied group of people made the dream of a college come true. We'll try to give a flavor of who we are by quoting students, staff and board members and by sharing student writing. Our accomplishments will speak for themselves.

We'll talk about our dreams and visions for the future and what a challenge we have to make them come true. We'll need the help of all our relatives.

As President of the Oglala Sioux Community College in the developing 70's and of Oglala Lakota College in the exciting 90's, I'm proud to share the story of our past 25 years. I pledge to not be afraid and to dare to dream despite the tremendous needs we have and the awesome challenges we face.

Thomas Shortbull, President
Oglala Lakota College
May 1, 1996

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Our Mission

The Mission of Oglala Lakota College is to establish and operate postsecondary institutions on the reservation granting certificates and degrees. This mission includes a diverse range of education from community service offerings to graduate degrees. The College will coordinate and regulate all higher education on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The ultimate goal is the establishment of a Lakota University.

The purposes articulated from the mission and approved by the Board of Trustees are: In carrying out the mission, the Oglala Lakota College Board of Trustees stresses the Lakota culture and Tribal self-determination. The College prepares students to understand the larger society as well as the customs and beliefs of the Lakota people. Working toward these ends, the College has defined as its purposes:

Tribal

- To provide the Oglala Sioux Tribe, as a sovereign people, with educated and trained human resources and personnel.
- To assist people in being active, productive members of their families, communities and the Oglala Sioux Tribe.
- To provide the Oglala Sioux Tribe with expertise and information needed for its development.
- To actively seek to place graduates.

Cultural

- To present the Lakota cultural perspective in teaching within the academic, occupational and community programs.
- To promote study of the Lakota culture as an area of study in itself.
- To research, study and disseminate Lakota language, culture and philosophy.

Academic

- To maintain high academic standards for staff and students.
- To maintain open enrollments.
- To be accessible to potential students.
- To teach students the necessary skills and human values which will assist them in fulfilling themselves and making a productive living.
- To work with other institutions and agencies in furthering the interests of the College.

Community

- To assist with the determination of development needs of the reservation districts and communities.
- To assist the reservation districts and communities in furthering their goals.
- To provide continuing and community education.
- To provide a sound, basic education for high school equivalency students.

Our Struggle

The Oglala are one of seven tribes or bands of the Great Lakota (Sioux) Nation. Like other Lakotas (or Dakotas or Nakotas depending on the dialect of the language used by the group) we have kept our cultural values and identity alive through the strength of kinship, the importance of the Tribe and the ties to the land.

"A century ago the Sioux Nation was a great nation. Its realm reached from the Platte River north to the Heart, from the Missouri west to the Big Horn Mountains."

The Sioux Hassrick

Our people arrived on this planet in the Black Hills of South Dakota and according to our history have lived on the great plains since time immemorial returning to the Black Hills as our sacred center. Our creation story says that we were originally members of the Pte Oyate (Buffalo Nation) and share kinship with all living and nonliving beings on Earth in an intricate and balanced web of life. All beings were respected for their appropriate place in this web.

"They were a people beginning - with beliefs, ointment, language, fables, love of children (you will find this spoken of in all the books). And a scheme of life that worked."

A History of the Indians of the United States Angie Debo

In the early 1800's contact began with traders and trappers. We maintained our way of life although eastern bands began having conflicts over land and were starting to be given alcohol (which we had no experience with) to help ease the turnover of land.

"The agreement known as the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 confined Red Cloud and his people to the western half of South Dakota in return for promises of rations, annuities, agencies, schools, physicians, blacksmiths, teachers, etc. for an undetermined number of years. To this date, the Lakota believe that no land was ceded under the 1868 treaty."

History of the Oglala Lakota Oyate Robert Gay

Fools Crow, the late Oglala holy man, bestows traditional mark of honor on a graduate.

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After gold was discovered and more settlers moved west, the government divided the Great Sioux Reservation into seven separate smaller reservations.

All that was left of over 40 million acres was a 50 by 90 mile reservation. The Lakota, a proud and self-sufficient people, were reduced from the greatest horsemen and hunters in the world to dependence on government rations. The U.S. Supreme Court has said of the taking of the Black Hills, "A more ripe and rank case of dishonorable dealing will never in probability be found in our history."

It is tragically ironic that the people who were promised education and medical services by treaty from the U.S. government are the most poorly educated and have the poorest health in the U.S. It is more tragically ironic that the proud people who were once self-sufficient and had no prisons and had a society that took care of everyone, are now the poorest people in America. The 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census show that Shannon County, which makes up the majority of the Pine Ridge reservation, has the lowest per capita income in the country.

Over the last 130 years we have endured broken treaties, physical and cultural genocide, imprisonment on the reservation, the near extinction of the buffalo, the theft of the Black Hills, the homesteading and allotment acts, and the prohibition of our religious ceremonies.

We fared no better in the area of education. A 1991 U.S. Department of Education Report, Indian Nations At Risk, documents the failures of the education system as follows:

- Schools have failed to nurture the intellectual development and academic performance of many native children, evident from the high dropout rates and negative attitudes toward school.
- Schools have discouraged the use of Native languages in the classroom, thereby contributing to a weakening of the Natives' resolve to retain and continue the development of their original languages and cultures
- Indian lands and resources are constantly besieged by outside forces interested in further reducing their original holdings
- Political relationships between the tribes and the federal government fluctuate with the will of the U.S. Congress and decisions by the courts.

The wisdom of our elders gives us hope.

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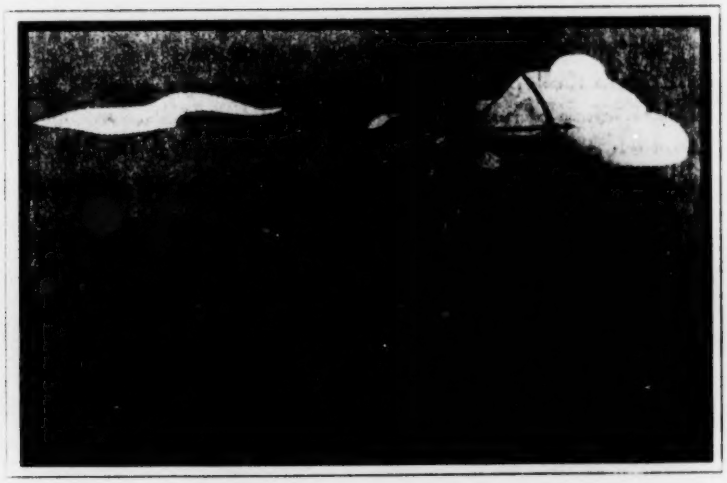

"Throughout all of this, the Oglala Sioux people maintained their identity, customs, beliefs and attachment to the Mother Earth..."

"Tribal colleges are truly community institutions. After years of brutal physical hardship and disorienting cultural loss, Native Americans - through the tribal college movement - are building new communities based on shared traditions. They are challenging the conditions that plague their societies and continue to threaten their survival."

Tribal Colleges: Shaping the Future of Native America **Ernest Boyer, former Secretary of Education**

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Our Dream

"Oglala Lakota College's origin is the convergence of two streams which originally came from the same spring. During the mid-60's several leaders of the Oglala Sioux Tribe on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota began speaking out on the need for higher education. These leaders explored several options such as the educational component of the New Careers Program provided through a contract with the University of Colorado in November, 1967."

"On the Pine Ridge reservation during this time there was a group of young visionaries: Birgil Kills Straight, Gerald One Feather, Gerald Clifford, and others who were willing to try new ideas, work with the communities, and challenge the tight grip exercised by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BJA) on the reservation. They felt the need to break the cycle of dependence the BJA had built. The problem reached into the health, economic, and educational systems and stifled independent growth and tribal self-determination. The young men saw higher education controlled on the community level as a necessary ingredient in breaking this cycle."

Tribal Community Colleges: Making Good Medicine Wayne Stein

In 1970 the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council authorized planning for a reservation based college. Tribal Chairman Gerald One Feather and many others felt for the reservation to truly make progress the tribe had to take control of its affairs in all areas. When the idea of an independent, reservation based college was first proposed, there were many skeptics both on and off the reservation. The visionaries persevered.

On March 4, 1971 the OST Council chartered the Lakota Higher Education Center "to establish and operate institutions granting postsecondary degrees and certificates... and/or enter into agreement with public or private agencies to offer higher education ...and to generally coordinate and regulate all higher education on the Pine Ridge Reservation."

A Board of Trustees was established that represented the various districts and communities of the reservation: Gerald One Feather, White Clay/Wakpamni; Hattie Twiss, Pahin Sinte/ Wounded Knee; Norman Rogers, Medicine Root/Eagle Nest; Ray Howe, Lacreek/Pass Creek, Alma Jacobs, Pine Ridge Village. We Oglala had begun taking control of our own higher education.

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Despite establishing control, the Lakota Higher Education Center (as the College was called then) had to negotiate agreements with Black Hills State College and the University of South Dakota to offer accredited courses transferable to state and other colleges. Our curriculum and degree offerings were very limited.

"I taught English 1 in the Spring of 1971 for the College. I had eight students from the ages of 21 to 50. I taught in a classroom at the local school and had to carry class materials around in a cardboard box. I had to beg supplies from the school. Sometimes we were locked out of class because someone forgot to leave the door open. But there was a plus. The enthusiasm of the students. All eight finished the class."
Volunteer Instructor

The 1973 Wounded Knee Takeover and political unrest split the reservation and violence abounded. The College was actually padlocked by the new Tribal Chairman. Classes continued.

Ray Howe was chosen as first President of LHEC and we had our first graduation in 1974. The politics had settled down a bit. The first Board of Trustees was elected. Up until then the Board had been appointed.

The College's administration building burned in 1975 and Tom Shortbull was chosen as the second President of LHEC.

"He (Shortbull) managed to bring to LHEC the benefits of that ability in the form of replacement facilities, State Board of Regents cooperation on new ventures in curriculum, and federal dollars for the college."
Tribally Controlled Colleges
Wayne Stein

The Board of Trustees was restructured to provide representation from all nine districts and the Tribal Council in 1978. Being rooted in the community has been our greatest strength. That year we began the process for accreditation under the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and changed our name to Oglala Sioux Community College.

The next year Elgin Bad Wound was chosen third OSCC President. The College moved to the new Piya Wiconi (New Life) administration building located outside of Kyle in the center of the reservation.

OSCC awarded our first Bachelor's degree in 1982 through an agreement with Black Hills State College.

OSCC was accredited in 1983 by the North Central Association at the Associates level with allowance for a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. That same year we changed OSCC's name to Oglala Lakota College.

North Central approved other Bachelor's degrees in 1984 and the Masters in Lakota Leadership/ Management in 1994.

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Our Dream Realized

In the Spring of 1971 we offered courses in local schools and people's basements. The courses were: anthropology (2), business (3), economics (1), English (3), sociology (6), Lakota language (1), math (1), history (1), art (1).

By 1978 we offered courses in double wide trailers, a condemned log cabin and assorted surplus buildings. We had the following two year degree programs: agriculture, business, education, general studies, human services, nursing and Lakota studies.

In 1996 we have two new centers but students in the other eight districts attend classes in the same double wide trailers, condemned log cabin and surplus buildings. Degrees offered include:

Master of Arts in Lakota Leadership/Management

Bachelor of Science in Business Education, Elementary Education, Human Services, Sociology, Business Administration

Bachelor of Arts in Lakota Studies and History

Associate of Applied Science in Organic Gardening, Office Automation, Management Information Systems and Organic Agriculture

Associate of Arts in Accounting, Agriculture, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Studies, Criminal Justice, Early Childhood, Elementary Education, General Business, General Studies, Lakota Studies, Natural Resource Management, Nursing, Social Services and Counseling, PreHealth, Tribal Management and Transfer Degree

Other programs include secondary education certification, special education endorsement, Child Development Associate, General Equivalency Diploma and graduate courses in education, Lakota studies and human resources, a Lakota summer institute, the tribal archives and the archives of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium.

OLC serves over 1,000 students a semester. Statistics for Fall, 1995 show a total enrollment of 1,009 of whom 88% are Indian and 71% are female. Over 90% of OLC students are first generation college students. Besides Oglala, there are 19 other tribes represented in the student body.

Of over 1,200 graduates, 93% are employed or pursuing higher degrees. At Little Wound Elementary School in Kyle, 21 of 26 teachers are OLC graduates. At the Pine Ridge Hospital, 50% of the registered nurses are OLC graduates. Three OLC faculty are OLC graduates.

"I have been associated with the College since 1968 and remember that in 1968 people from the University of South Dakota said a college would never work on the reservation. Now OLC provides 120 jobs and many needed services."

Lowel Amiotte, former OLC President

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In 1971 the people who dreamed of and started the College probably never dreamed of what the College would be in 1996. They were laughed at but forged ahead knowing the need was there and they had to do something about it. The following list of accomplishments is a proud testimony to their vision.

We conferred our first four Masters in Lakota Leadership/ Management in 1994. We are scheduled to complete construction of the Woksape Tipi Learning Resource Center in October, 1996. We are working with the National Science Foundation and NASA to be a Model Institution for Excellence to develop degrees in Environmental Science, Computer Science and Preengineering to be offered through distance learning to five tribal colleges.

We attained full Accreditation for the AA in Nursing from the South Dakota Board of Nursing. We were the only nursing school in South Dakota to have 100% of graduates pass their Nursing Boards in 1995. We achieved re-accreditation for the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from the South Dakota Board of Education.

We obtained a five year grant from the Department of Education Strengthening Institutions program to upgrade the college's computer systems for research, finance, student support and instruction. We are working with the Kellogg Foundation to explore further graduate options under the Masters in Lakota Leadership including school principal endorsement and the possibility of offering the degree to all tribal colleges.

Our enrollments keep growing. Our young people are thirsting for education. Our degrees keep expanding to supply the varied needs of the tribe. We are working hard and making Oglala Lakota College respected and successful. In the midst of the successes, every day we deal with burst pipes at broken down facilities, students who drop out because of no day care or transportation, and faculty who are the lowest paid in the region.

"On the other hand, it is of some note that fewer than five percent of the Reservation's school teachers were tribal members when the College began and now over 25% of the teachers are Lakota. Similarly, when the College began a four year degree in Human Services in 1985, there were no Native American case workers in the State Social Services offices in Pine Ridge or Martin. In 1992 almost all case workers were Native Americans and almost all of them came through the College."

Wealth, Poverty and Education
Dr. Dowell Smith, 1994

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My Background

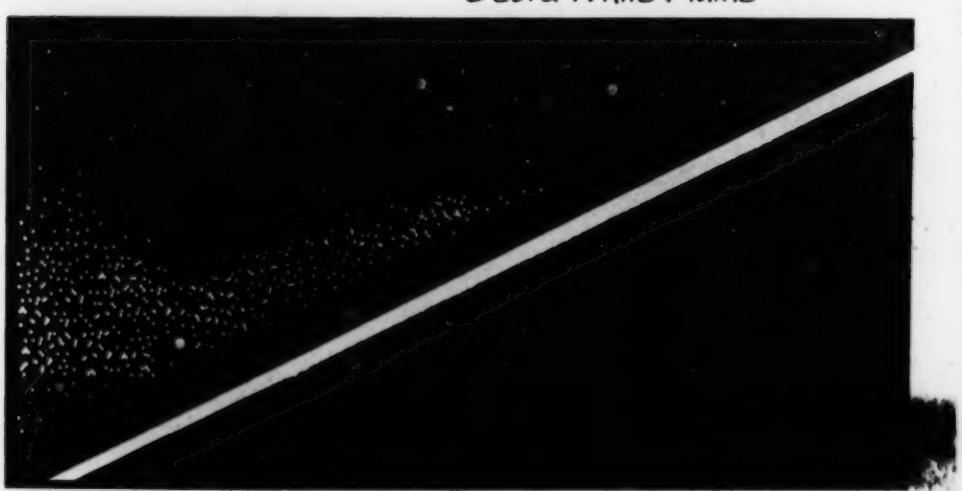
Surrounding me are
full-moon shadows
on the tree covered hillside
Above me
glittering stars twinkle with silent secrets
against the prairie sky

Slowly
traveling throughout the canyons
summer winds whisper with pine and cedar branches
where, loud in the powerful silence of the prairie nights,
owl calls owl
and coyotes cry like women
or frightened children

and in the distance, the
silhouette
of the Heart of Everything That Is
large and breathtaking
looms

Indian Country

Debra White Plume



Before There Was a Song

The tall prairie grasses lay, in silence
Before there was a song,
They swayed in golden rays of setting sun,
in silence
Before there was a song,
The new moon, it bathed the blades in
blueish white, in silence
Before there was a song,
The tips glistened from drops of morning
dew, in silence
Before there was a song,
The song, it echoed through the winds,
The song, it greeted the new moon
The song, it touched the morning sun
The meadow lark, it sung.

Jean Caudle

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Our People

"And I saw the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy."

Black Elk, Oglala holy man

"OLC means a lot to the community."

Duane Locke, Pahin Sinte Center Director

"To go where no one has dared to go. We do things people said couldn't be done. OLC is willing and able to change and move forward. Every year we try new things."

Emory New Holy, former White Clay Center Director

"Oglala Lakota College has played a major role in my family life and education. OLC provided direction in my life after returning home to the Pine Ridge Reservation with my two girls. OLC made it possible for me to graduate with a Bachelors and the encouragement of staff and instructors motivated me to complete a Masters in Counseling."

Devona Lone Wolf, OLC Human Services Instructor

The graduation pow wow is the high point of every year.

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"We are decentralized but we are a family."

John Yellow Bird Steele, President, Oglala Sioux Tribe and former Board of Trustees member

""OLC provides a close connection between the academic world and reality."

Paul Robertson, Faculty member

"The College gives our people more opportunities to make choices."

Pat Lee, former Lakota Studies Department Chair, now Oglala Sioux Chief Judge

"The Board has a lot of guts to hold a retreat with staff and students. We have heated discussions at Board meetings, but we leave as friends. I am proud to be part of the Board."

Lloyd Eagle Bull, former Board member for 15 years

"We focus on students. We sometimes don't realize how special it is to bring students, board members and administrators together."

Jeanne Smith, General Studies Instructor and early staff member in 1971

"We need more space and more support. Our staff does so much with so little."

Rev. Simon Looking Elk, former Vice-President, current Chaplain at Ft. Meade Veterans Hospital

"The College is a way of being Indian. I have invented a new form of nepotism. Over the past years I have had 15 immediate family members get degrees and 36 get GED's."

Pearl Cottier, Lacreek Center Director

"We learn the techniques we need to exist in 1987 and also the tools to allow us to exist as a group of people."

George Mackey, Student

"We need to be concerned about students who drop out. Students have many problems - finances, babysitting - but we need to give them encouragement to stay in."

Stephen Starr, former Board member

"Commitment. The Board and College administration were committed for over three years to keep the Nursing Program going. Now OLC has one of only two RN programs on a reservation in the United States."

Joan Nelson, Nursing Faculty

"We want our students to be proud of being Indian. Our role is to see what is good for our students and bring them out of their shells."

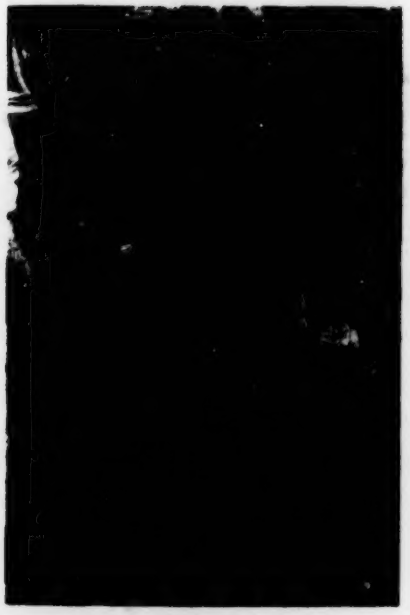
Emma Waters, former Board member

"We provide education for people who otherwise would have no opportunity."

Cordelia White Elk, former Community Services Coordinator, new Board member

"OLC has allowed me to pursue a dream I have which is to get a law degree. I received my Associate's and Bachelor's degrees from OLC while being able to stay with my family."

William Lone Hill, Oglala Sioux Tribal Court Worker



We want better classrooms and more support for future students.

"When you look at what work is available on the reservation the college offers degrees in every area jobs are available. It's convenient to get a degree here. I went to Huron and Black Hills State before I went to OLC. I didn't see any difference in quality. There are good instructors here. I learned a lot. It really helps having a college here. I didn't have to leave my land. And it helped with my family, I have two kids."

Lawrence Janis, BS in Human Services, Counselor, Drug Elimination Program, Board member

"I wouldn't have gone to college if I had to leave the reservation. I had six children, four are living. I took care of my grandson while I was going to school after my son died. I'm 55, but here I wasn't the oldest student in my class."

Wanda White Bull, BS in Human Services, Job Training Partnership Act Coordinator

"Going to OLC was good because I didn't have to leave my home and kids, and I could work. I'm halfway through my Masters. I haven't finished because I'm so busy working and taking care of kids. OLC really helped me. I thank them."

Alice Lone Elk, BS in Education, teacher at Rockyford School, Rockyford

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"My degree in social services is helpful although I work as a journalist. I wanted to work to help Indians out and working here accomplishes that. I got on-the-job training. Social services helped a lot with interviewing skills and with public relations. Indian studies helped a lot, too. A lot of my family, my mom, both sisters and brothers all went to OLC. My sister went from her AA to her Masters. I would never have been able to go to college anywhere else. I had a family."

Amanda War Bonnet, AA in Social Services, former Editor, Indian Country Today, presently media Director, Little Wound School, Kyle

"I had four children of my own and raised eight nieces and nephews while I was going to school. It was an advantage to be among people I knew. I had relatives in classes and knew most of the people. I was comfortable with the people. All my children who are old enough have gone to college or gotten training after high school."

Joy Bush, BS in Education, teacher at Our Lady of Lourdes, Porcupine

Graduates stand proud for a Lakota honoring song.

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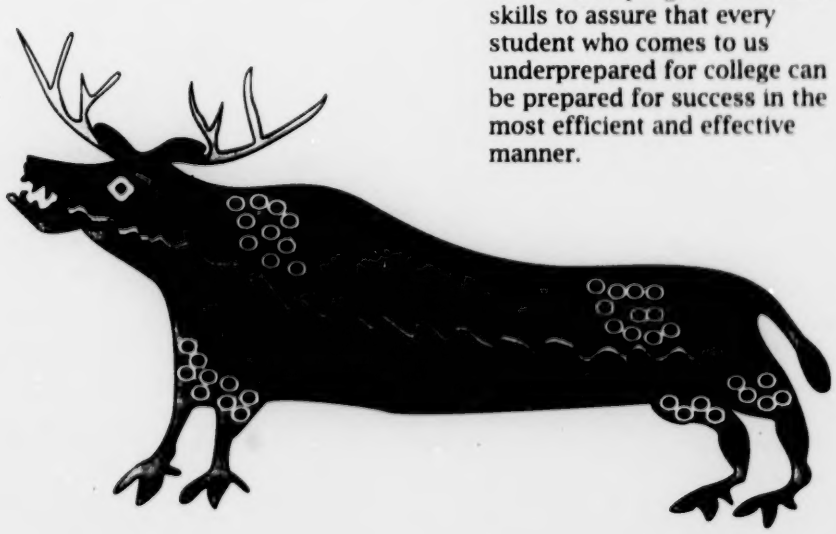
Our Dreams for the Future

- We will complete construction and furnishing of the Woksape Tipi Learning Resource Center in the Fall of 1996. This is a dream that has taken over ten years to accomplish. Once it is completed it will give us the space to upgrade the general library collection and Oglala Sioux Tribal Archives.
- We need to provide adequate classroom space and community learning resources by building Learning Centers in Pine Ridge, Pahin Sinte, Wounded Knee, White Clay, Eagle Nest, Lacreek, Pass Creek and Rapid City. Our students attend classes in everything from a condemned log cabin to twenty year old dilapidated double wide trailers with inadequate heating, cooling and space.
- We are developing degrees in environmental science, computer science and preengineering so our students can fill the technical positions required to protect the environment and to appropriately develop the reservation's natural resources.
- We dream of creating endowed chairs in Lakota Leadership/Management and Lakota Studies. These disciplines are at the core of our existence as a college and a people and we need to treat them with the respect they deserve. We are the only hope for the preservation and enhancement of the Lakota language.
- We will create computerized outcome, teaching and assessment program for basic skills to assure that every student who comes to us underprepared for college can be prepared for success in the most efficient and effective manner.



- We are exploring the expansion of the Master's Degree in Lakota Leadership/Management to provide certification in education, health, etc. There is a tremendous shortage of school principals, especially Lakota. We need to provide local people with a basis in Lakota language and culture to run our schools, hospital, clinics and other educational and health programs.
- We are integrating our institutional research system to link academic, counseling, financial aid, fiscal and other data to support planning, decision-making and fundraising. We need to be more efficient than other colleges since we have less resources and more of a need.
- We dream of meeting the often expressed basic needs of our students including adequate scholarships, better scheduling, career counseling, day care, transportation, tutoring and placement.
- We need to create a competency based teacher education program to provide effective teachers for reservation schools. Our current teacher education program delivery system is not providing enough teachers to meet the great demand.
- We are more than a college. We are the basis of development for the Lakota Nation. We need to offer research, consulting and training services to tribal programs, elders and communities.

Our staff and students plan for the future.

Our Challenge

Oglala Lakota College has no student union. We have no dorms. We have no football teams. Our instructors are among the lowest paid college instructors around. They have to travel up to 100 miles to class over pothole studded roads often in dangerous weather. Our students live in the poorest county in the country and often hitchhike to class. Our funding continues to lag far behind most other colleges in this country.

We do have dedicated students, faculty and staff. We do have a strong culture of fortitude and generosity. We do have teachers who concentrate on teaching. We do have students who appreciate the value of a college education. We do have a strong presence in our community and a strong link to our Tribe. We do have our dreams that we will fulfill.

It took us ten years to raise the 1.3 million dollars to construct the Woksape Tipi Learning Resource Center. The funds came from the Pew Charitable Trust, the Hearst Foundation, the Bush Foundation and the generosity of more than 3,000 friends from across the country who contributed over half of the cost.

We've built and should be able to furnish the Woksape Tipi but we still need to upgrade our collection of books and audio visual materials to support our degree programs at an acceptable level. We'll put a portion of our budget aside each year to purchase materials, but we need to raise funds from outside sources.

We estimate it will cost about $500,000 a center, or $4 million, to build all eight District Learning Centers. Construction funds are the hardest to raise. We're doing a capital campaign, Rebuilding Our Nation 2001. We are enlisting as much foundation and corporate support as possible. We will build the centers with the help of our friends.

Our students need help with scholarships and day care and transportation. We need to develop sustainable programs to provide assistance.

Lack of funding has limited our ability to provide all we wish to for our students but it has not stopped us. And it will not stop us in the future.

OLC was the only school in South Dakota to have 100% of graduates pass their Nursing Boards in 1995.

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Our Vision

"By lifting our vision, the petty quarrels of our daily existence will be overcome by a view of our future, and our communities will emerge as sacred places."

Vine Deloria, Jr., Dakota philosopher and author

Our vision for Oglala Lakota College in 2001 is that we are a thriving institution meeting the needs of the Oglala Sioux Tribe for educated and trained human resources.

A group of visitors to the June 25, 2001 graduation walk into the Woksape Tipi Learning Resource Center and marvel at the 50,000 volumes/audiovisual materials and the Internet connection to access any library in the world. They move on into the Oglala Sioux Tribal Archives and see the exhibit on the Tribal Presidents.

They stroll over to the remodeled Piya Wiconi Administration building to view the Lakota art show - the finest collection of Oglala art yet assembled. They hear lectures on Lakota art from the person who holds the Black Elk Endowed Chair in Lakota Studies.

The visitors travel to Manderson to visit one of the eight newly built District Learning Centers. They're amazed by the spacious and attractive building with full parking lots and natural landscaping. They' re further amazed by the number of computers in each classroom, the well equipped day care room, the well stocked library and the van that says Wounded Knee College Center Student Transportation Co-op.

The visitors return to attend graduation. The first Masters graduates in Lakota Educational Leadership receive their Masters degrees from the President of OLC and their certification as superintendents and principals from the Governor of South Dakota. The first Masters graduates in Lakota Health Leadership receive their degrees. Then a roar goes up as the first nine graduates of the Lakota Linguist/Teacher program receive their degrees and give one minute speeches in perfect Lakota.

The President of South Dakota School of Mines and Technology is on hand for a special presentation of engineering degrees to the ten students who completed the OLC pre-engineering degree and went on to earn Bachelor's degrees from SDSM&T.

The 140 graduates include Masters, Bachelors and Associates. The number has gone up because of the new computerized student status, counseling and scheduling system that's been in place for two years.

The roar continues as the President of OLC announces that the endowment of Oglala Lakota College has reached $10,000,000. The roar intensifies as the President announces that OLC will be pursuing accreditation for a Doctor of Lakota Studies degree. An even louder roar goes up as the OLC Research Director announces the 2000 U.S. Census shows that for the first time in 30 years the Pine Ridge reservation does not have the lowest per capita income in the country.

The visitors eat a healthy dinner of vegetables from the OLC organic garden enterprise and buffalo that has been raised by the students of the Holistic Environmental Management program.

The visitors are asked to lead the grand entry of the evening pow wow. They are being honored as part of the 30th anniversary of the College. Gerald One Feather, Birgil Kills Straight, Jim Hamm, Dowell and Jeanne Smith, Tony Fresquez, Sissy Eagle Bull, Ray Howe, Calvin Jumping Bull, and many others. As they reflect on the events of the day, some have tears in their eyes.

Others yell out to the background of the drums: "Hoka He, Takoja, ikopesni ihanbla po! Woihanble ogna unipi." "Go for it, Grandchildren. Do not be afraid to dream. We are living our dream."

* * * *

Our Vision for the Woksape Tipi Library came true in 1996. We believe our visions for 2001 will also come true.

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Thunderbird

The thunderbird is at the neck of the mountains
His feathers have made the sky grey and blue
His screeching is thunder
That echoes in the hidden valleys below
His claws are the lightning
That touch the earth
His eyes shed tears
That lead to thousands of raindrops
his wings and body stretch for miles
He flies with freedom
In hope, to find a peak
To rest his tired body
But the search
Is forever endless ,

Donette Lone Hill

Grandmother's Song

Sage burns, smoking in
a tin can Grandmother holds,
climbs the air
to East and West
to North and South
to moon and sun.
Grandmother's wrinkled soft hands
are warm against my face.
She smiles and gives me sage ashes
and I hold her
little hand in mine.

Debra White Plume

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